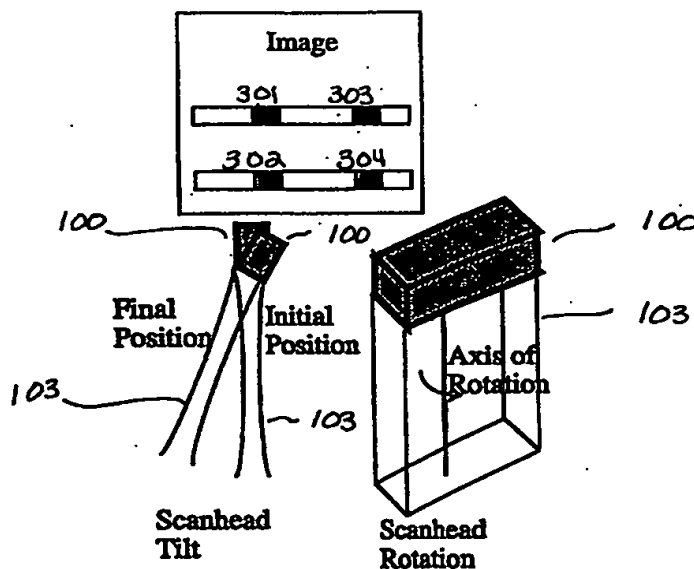




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(54) Title: **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR COMPOSITION AND DISPLAY OF THREE-DIMENSIONAL IMAGE FROM TWO-DIMENSIONAL ULTRASOUND**



## (57) Abstract

A three-dimensional image data set representing a volume of material such as human tissue is created using speckle decorrelation techniques to process successive two-dimensional data slices (301, 302, 303, 304) from a moving, standard 1D or 1.5D ultrasound transducer. This permits the use of standard ultrasound machinery, without the use of additional slice-position hardware, to create 3D images without having to modify the machinery or its operation. Similar techniques can be used for special data processing with the imaging system as well as to expedite the image acquisition process. Optionally, the image quality of 2D images can be enhanced through the use of multiple 3D data sets derived using the method.

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1       **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR COMPOSITION AND DISPLAY OF**  
2               **THREE-DIMENSIONAL IMAGE FROM TWO-DIMENSIONAL**  
3                       **ULTRASOUND**  
4

5       The invention described below was made in part with government support. The  
6       United States government has certain rights in the invention.

7       As well-known to those of ordinary skill, a standard real-time two-dimensional  
8       (2D) ultrasound scan typically entails the following. Referring to Figure 1, an operator  
9       holds a transducer 100 in one position relative to a volume of material 102, e.g., human  
10       tissue. The transducer 100 is sometimes referred to as a scanhead; it commonly has an  
11       essentially linear, one-dimensional (1D) shape, although scanheads of round or other  
12       shapes are also known, and emits a beam of ultrasound energy toward the material 102  
13       within a "scan plane" 103. The ultrasound energy is reflected from the material 102 and  
14       detected by the scanhead, which generates data signals representative of the detected  
15       energy. A conventional ultrasound machine 105 receives and processes the resulting  
16       data from the scanhead 100 and displays a 2D image of the tissue volume 102 being  
17       scanned, e.g., on a video display terminal 107, a film camera, or other hard copy device  
18       (not shown). Movement of the scanhead 100 results in different 2D views of the tissue  
19       volume 102 being presented.

20       Three-Dimensional (3D) data can be derived from a series of 2D views taken  
21       from different angles or positions. These views are sometimes referred to as "slices" of  
22       the actual three-dimensional tissue volume 102; the data sets used to generate these  
23       views are referred to here as "data slices." Experienced radiologists and similarly  
24       trained personnel can often mentally correlate a series of 2D images derived from these  
25       data slices to obtain useful 3D information. For example, a radiologist observing a scan  
26       of 2D views of a pregnant woman's abdomen may be able to diagnose the fetus's cleft  
27       palate by repeatedly moving the scanhead 100 and mentally correlating the 2D images  
28       presented.

29       Automated 3D image reconstruction has been done in the past by (a) using  
30       mechanical or other means of encoding the successive positions of the scanhead 100 as

1 it is moved about the tissue volume 102, and (b) processing this additional encoded  
2 data to provide an indication of the relative positions of the 2D images acquired. This is  
3 often difficult to do on a real-time basis. Several technical problems have restricted the  
4 use of such systems, including noise interference and limits on spatial resolution. A  
5 related approach is to force the scanhead 100 to move over a predetermined track, but  
6 that can be adversely affected by movement of the material 102, which often happens in  
7 scanning human bodies.

8       Efforts are already being made by some ultrasound scanner manufacturers and  
9 others to produce specialized 2D hardware for 3D imaging. Such 2D hardware can be  
10 expensive to produce and cumbersome to use, with problems including the current cost  
11 and size of the scanhead, image artifacts produced by the fluid path used, etc.  
12 Replacing the current 1D arrays with full 2D arrays for making true 3D images is not  
13 yet practical due to the number of elements that would be required in the transducer,  
14 connections to these and the electronic channels required to services the additional  
15 elements. The ultrasound industry is presently interested in the potential for 3D  
16 imaging technology which would not obviate the current cost advantage of 1D  
17 scanheads.

#### 18       **Speckle Tracking of Moving Tissues**

19       The invention described and claimed below makes a novel use of image  
20 analysis, or analysis of RF (radio frequency) data used to create ultrasound images, to  
21 indicate the relative position of such images in a three dimensional data set. For  
22 example, in one implementation, a speckle correlation technique is used that is well-  
23 known in other contexts: When a source of coherent energy (e.g., a laser or an  
24 ultrasound beam) interacts with a collection of scatterers, the amplitude of the reflected  
25 signal varies in relation to the relative positions of the scatterers. Displayed visually,  
26 this amplitude variation appears as a speckle pattern.

27       Ultrasound speckle correlation techniques have been used to determine the  
28 movement of blood. Consider an example: Suppose that the material 102 is a human  
29 blood vessel with blood cells moving through it. The blood cells are scatterers of the

1 ultrasound energy generated by the scanhead 100, meaning that the amplitudes of the  
2 reflected signals vary in relation to the relative positions of the blood cells.

3 The blood cells are continuously circulating in the body, however.  
4 Consequently, specific blood cells are continuously moving out from under the  
5 scanhead 100 (and out of the ultrasound energy beam) and being replaced by others.

6 As a result, the speckle pattern of the reflected signal is continuously changing  
7 because of the movement of the blood cells. This is referred to as "decorrelation" of  
8 the signal with respect to the original speckle pattern. By monitoring the amount of  
9 decorrelation using standard techniques, the rate at which blood moves under the  
10 scanhead may be monitored.

11 The invention described and claimed below was developed in the course of  
12 efforts to create 3D images of the breast, to improve the quality of breast cancer  
13 diagnosis. It proved difficult to obtain 3D ultrasound images of breasts using  
14 conventional mechanical registration of scanhead position. The difficulty was  
15 particularly acute for small, dense breasts, which are well recognized as also presenting  
16 problems for X-ray mammography diagnosis.

17 In a novel adaptation of decorrelation techniques used for monitoring blood  
18 perfusion, a 3D image data set representing a volume of material such as human tissue  
19 is created using successive 2D data slices from a moving, standard 1D or 1.5D  
20 ultrasound transducer. (The term "1.5D" refers to the use of a limited number of  
21 separate elements in a second dimension.) This permits the use of standard ultrasound  
22 machinery, without the use of additional slice-position hardware, to create 3D images  
23 without having to modify the machinery or its operation. Similar techniques can be  
24 used for special data processing within the imaging system as well to expedite the  
25 image acquisition process.

26 Optionally, the image quality of 2D images can be enhanced through the use of  
27 multiple 3D data sets derived using the method.

28 Figure 1 is a simplified perspective view of an ultrasound scanner being used to  
29 scan a material.

1       Figure 2 is a flow chart depicting the operations performed in a method in  
2 accordance with the invention.

3       Figure 3 illustrates a method of monitoring scanhead tilt and rotation.

4       Figure 4 illustrates an approach to scanhead position tracking.

5       Figure 5 depicts an approach to slice positioning.

6       Figure 6 is a block diagram of software modules used in one implementation of  
7 the invention.

### 8       **A Post-Processing Implementation**

9       An illustrative implementation of a method in accordance with the invention is  
10 depicted in flow-chart form in Figure 2. At block 200, data acquired by ultrasound  
11 scanning of a material 102 using a scanhead 100 are collected into a computer memory  
12 for post-processing by a computer or other machine, e.g., by a programmable  
13 ultrasound machine 105 loaded with a suitable computer program or programs. The  
14 material in question may be a volume of human tissue or any other material suitable for  
15 ultrasound scanning, as well known in the art.

16       The scanning process itself generates a series of signals encoding data  
17 representing physical two-dimensional "slices" of the material being scanned. At block  
18 205, data encoded in signals corresponding to the respective slices of the material are  
19 defined and referred to for convenience as data slices. One or more regions is defined  
20 within a first data slice, referred to as data slice 1. Similarly, one or more regions is  
21 defined within another data slice, referred to as data slice 2.

22       At block 210, the amounts of correlation between the respective regions in data  
23 slice 1 and data slice 2 are conventionally determined. For example, suppose that data  
24 slice 1 is divided into regions 1a, 1b, etc., and data slice 2 is divided into regions 2a, 2b,  
25 etc. The amount of correlation between regions 1a and 2a is determined, as is the  
26 amount of correlation between regions 1b and 2b, etc. The respective amounts of  
27 decorrelation may be determined by a process of speckle decorrelation measurement as  
28 known to those of ordinary skill.

1       At block 215, the respective amounts of correlation between the regions are  
2       used to compute, in conventional fashion, a relative positional difference vector that  
3       represents a relative positional difference between data slice 1 and data slice 2. Those  
4       of ordinary skill having the benefit of this disclosure will recognize that the relative  
5       positional difference vector could be a scalar, i.e., a one-dimensional vector.

6       Data representations of at least a portion of data slice 1, at least a portion of  
7       data slice 2, and the computed relative positional difference vector may be stored in a  
8       memory device, e.g., RAM or a disk storage device in a computer, for future use.  
9       Those of ordinary skill having the benefit of this disclosure will recognize that the data  
10      representations may be preprocessed if desired before storage, e.g., by conventionally  
11      "compressing" the data for greater storage efficiency. Such compression might  
12      include, e.g., storing, as the representation of a given data slice, a vector representing a  
13      change from a different data slice. Other compression techniques such as the well-  
14      known LZW method may also be used.

15      At block 220, from the relative positional difference vector, a computation is  
16      made to determine the relative positions of data slice 1 and data slice 2 within a 3D  
17      image of the material. The 3D image is conventionally displayed on a visual display  
18      such as a video display terminal, a computer printout, a computer-generated  
19      photograph, etc.

20      Optionally, portions of the data slices may be processed as described above  
21      instead of the entire data slices. That is, the portions acquired and processed may be of  
22      sizes smaller than is necessary to create a complete 2D image. Processing of such  
23      smaller portions may be used to determine the scanhead position.

24      The foregoing operations are discussed in more detail below.

## 25      **Scanning the material volume**

26      The material volume 102 in question is conventionally scanned with any  
27      standard ultrasound scanner, using a linear scan for coverage of a comparatively large  
28      region, optionally with a tilt of the scanhead 100 to get at hard-to-reach places, e.g.,  
29      under the rib cage in the case of medical scanning. The image data thereby obtained

1 during the scan may be conventionally collected in any of a variety of forms, i.e.  
2 envelope-detected, RF, etc.

3        Optionally, a rotational scan may be used to image an area under the transducer  
4 in the volume of rotation. (The volume immediately adjacent to the transducer's  
5 starting position may be included in the rotation.) This provides at least two  
6 advantages: First, rotating the scanhead about a central scan-line axis allows repeated  
7 views of the same portions of the material volume, which helps correct for any  
8 scanhead movement that may occur. Second, when the scanhead is rotated,  
9 decorrelation occurs at different rates along the radius out from the axis of rotation  
10 (i.e., the radius of the circle of rotation), allowing a more rapid image acquisition. A  
11 disadvantage, of course, is that the scan area is only as big as the area scanned by  
12 having the axis of rotation at one end of the scanhead.

13        More than one set of 3D image data may be obtained from different scanning  
14 directions. These may be combined by one or more methods discussed below (cross  
15 correlation between vertical scan lines and homologous point registration) to position  
16 the images with respect to each other. Although orthogonality of the 3D image data is  
17 not required, if two sets of 3D image data are orthogonal then each image in one set  
18 where the geometry is fixed within the scan plane provides maximal information to aid  
19 in positioning the planes in the other data set.

#### 20        **Determining relative decorrelation of specific portions of the image**

21        A region of interest is defined in one of the data slices in the series of data  
22 slices. A corresponding region of interest is defined on a second slice. The second slice  
23 may be immediately adjacent the first slice (e.g., slices 1 and 2) or more widely spaced  
24 from the first slice (e.g., slices 1 and 3), depending on the desired sampling rate for the  
25 implementation in question.

26        The amount of correlation between the two corresponding regions of interest is  
27 experimentally measured, using conventional techniques, and compared to previously-  
28 measured decorrelation for a given transducer. The decorrelation measured may be  
29 related to the type of the material 102 as necessary to improve accuracy. The



1 measured decorrelation permits conventional computation of the relative positional  
2 difference between the two slices. The same computations are performed for each  
3 successive pairs of slices.

4 As shown in Figure 3, the tilt and rotation of the transducer or scanhead 100  
5 may be monitored by examining the decorrelation rates at various positions of the  
6 scanhead within the scan plane. Assume, for example, two specified regions of the  
7 material 102 at differing distances from the scanhead 100. If the decorrelation rates  
8 differ after appropriate corrections for the beam shape, then it follows that the scanhead  
9 100 is being tilted as shown in Figure 3. By examining the difference between two  
10 regions separated in the lateral direction, rotation of the scanhead may be monitored  
11 regardless of where the rotation axis was in the lateral direction. In Figure 3, the  
12 difference in rate between regions 301 and 302 and between 303 and 1 indicates tilting  
13 of the scanhead. By examining differences in the lateral direction, i.e. differences  
14 between 301 and 303 and between 302 and 304, rotation of the scanhead may be  
15 monitored regardless of where the rotation axis was in the lateral direction.

16 When two data sets from differing look directions are obtained, one method  
17 which may be used to position the scan planes in one set is to use the position of the  
18 intersection between every pair of scan planes as shown in Figure 5. This is  
19 accomplished by performing a cross correlation between vertical scan lines from each  
20 data set (referred to as "A mode correlation"). The peak of this correlation defines the  
21 intersection of the two planes and any relative vertical movement between the planes.  
22 These correlation values are then mapped onto a 2D representation of the area near the  
23 intersection. The position of the peak value in this 2D area is the estimated position of  
24 the intersection, which defines the position of both planes. The magnitude of this peak  
25 relative to the rest of the 2D area can be used as a weighting. Each plane's position  
26 will be estimated by using all of its intersections with the orthogonal image. Its final  
27 position is determined, then, by the weighted average of these estimates. In this way, a  
28 strong feature found on the intersection of two scan planes contributes heavily to the  
29 determination of their positions.

1        Another method which may be applied to any nonparallel image sets taken  
2 within the same volume of material is the use of homologous points registration.  
3 Points or other structures which can be identified as common to two or more data sets  
4 can be used to correctly define the geometric relationship between the image sets. In  
5 the case of two orthogonal planes, the process is quite simple. The images are first  
6 placed with some arbitrary spacing. As noted in subpart 4.1B above, the geometric  
7 relationship within an image (x-z plane of one 3D data set) is known. Therefore if  
8 objects identified within an image plane can be similarly identified in the reconstructed  
9 x-z plane of the other set then the image plane separation and the vertical position of  
10 the image planes can be adjusted to correctly position the plane. The difficulty with the  
11 method as described is the need for manual or electronic identification of homologous  
12 points.

13        Once the methods described in subparts 4.1A, B, or C are complete,  
14 conventional image-processing techniques are used to position the data slices, utilizing  
15 the relative-position information obtained above to correctly position each data slice in  
16 a 3D display, which can then be output to a monitor, a hard copy, etc. Optionally, the  
17 data slices can be interpolated to produce a 3D image data set with uniform spacing.

18        Those of ordinary skill having the benefit of this disclosure will appreciate that  
19 multiple 3D data sets acquired in this fashion can be conventionally processed to  
20 improve the overall image quality of the 2D slices in the 3D sets. Those 2D slices can  
21 be redisplayed as two-dimensional images if desired.

## 22        **On-the-Fly Processing**

23        It is anticipated that in another implementation, by restricting the regions that  
24 are measured for motion, it will be possible to minimize the computational time to the  
25 point where such monitoring can be performed in real-time. The advantage is that the  
26 position information may be computed at a rate faster than the frame rate of the  
27 imaging system. Also, it is expected to be possible to set motion criteria which will  
28 indicate when the images should be taken to provide an automated way of reducing the  
29 number of frames acquired in the 3D data set and fix their spacing to make

1 reconstruction simpler. The processing of RF data for position encoding would then be  
2 a separate process which is expected to be more accurate than that possible for the  
3 envelope-detected information. In addition, the decorrelation as calculated by these  
4 methods may be used to measure the velocity of the scanhead and provide the operator  
5 an indication to gauge the rate at which the material should be scanned.

#### 6 **Some Additional Implementations of the Invention**

7 The benefits of eliminating the requirement for encoding of scanhead-position  
8 data should not be underestimated. It will be apparent to those of ordinary skill having  
9 the benefit of this disclosure that in addition to the elimination of cumbersome  
10 manipulation systems and/or position encoding devices, an image-based slice  
11 positioning system can provide other motion artifact reduction possibilities and similar  
12 capabilities.

13 For example, it is expected that speckle decorrelation techniques of the kind  
14 described above can be used for the correction of respiratory motion when 3D data set  
15 is reconstructed. Elevational correction as described above as well as in-plane  
16 correction can be used to keep a region of interest stationary in the image.

17 As another example, it is expected that acquisition of multiple planes, e.g., two,  
18 at each location, and correlation of subsequent frames with these can be used to  
19 determine when the transducer has moved a fixed distance. This enables not only  
20 knowledge of distance traveled but also direction. Figure 4 depicts how the technique  
21 may be applied. At Position 1 two scan planes 103 from a so-called 1.5D scanhead  
22 array 400 (which is divided into two linear arrays or potentially used to steer into a  
23 second scan plan) are formed at positions 401 and 402. Subsequently the transducer or  
24 scanhead moves and as the images are acquired the correlation is calculated. A peak  
25 correlation will occur between the previously acquired scan plane 402 and the new  
26 plane at position 403 when the scanhead has moved a fixed distance. Note that  
27 correlations can be made also for motion in the opposite direction. The placement of  
28 planes in the 3D data set could be performed only when the correlation occurred thus  
29 placing the planes on a uniform grid space. Or if more planes were needed, the planes

1 which were acquired between correlation points could be spaced uniformly over the  
2 distance traveled.

3 The rate that the speckle pattern is changing can also indicate the presence of  
4 phase aberrators in the field of view for the scanhead. By looking at various regions of  
5 the image, sudden, inconsistent, regional changes in correlation rates will indicate an  
6 aberration of phase. Such mapping could indicate which data to throw out of some  
7 images when compounding or reconstructing in 3D or perhaps when and where phase  
8 aberration correction would need to be performed in the images.

9 It is anticipated that the above described techniques can also be used for fine  
10 positioning of a scanhead in conjunction with other positioning systems. The latter  
11 might be able to monitor the long range motion of the scanhead but lack the fine spatial  
12 resolution required for the best 3D reconstructions. Such encoding devices include  
13 optical, mechanical, magnetic, electric spark systems, etc. all of which have been used  
14 in the past for 3D ultrasound imaging.

15 It is also anticipated that 2D speckle tracking (Chen, Hein et al. 1991; Chen,  
16 Jenkins et al. 1992) can be used to monitor motion in the scan plane between adjacent  
17 slices and then measure the decorrelation result. In such an implementation, the 2D  
18 speckle tracking identifies the correct vertical and horizontal translation required for  
19 placing the adjacent slice with respect to the first. The minimum decorrelation value is  
20 determined by comparing selected regions in the two images and the relative positions  
21 of the location with minimum decorrelation would indicate the relative vertical and  
22 horizontal position of the planes. The minimum decorrelation value which then  
23 remained between the slices is the result of the translation in the elevational direction  
24 and is expected to be an improved estimate over assuming no vertical or horizontal  
25 motion.

26

## 27 Software

28 Figure 6 is a block diagram of preliminary software as implemented under the  
29 AVS software package of Advanced Visualization Systems of Waltham,  
30 Massachusetts. Images are collected from an ultrasound scanner and read into the

1 workstation memory. In this example the data is obtained using a TARGA frame  
2 grabber and thus the module TGA Stacker 600 is used. The RGB images are then  
3 processed by extract scalar 605 to select one channel and then the 3D data set is sliced  
4 using orthogonal slicer 610 and a single 2D plane displayed using image viewer 615 to  
5 select regions of interest (ROIs) to be processed for determining the slice separation.  
6 The region is selected using crop 620 and redisplayed using another image viewer 625.  
7 The pixels contained in the ROI in each image is converted to a 1D vector using ROI  
8 to strip 630 and the process repeated using animated integer 635 connected to the  
9 orthogonal slicer 610. Each of these strips are then combined in a 2D vector using glue  
10 640. These data are then subsampled using another crop 645 to determine the how  
11 many of the image ROIs will be used to compute the position of each image. The  
12 controls for determining which images are processed for each slice position calculation  
13 are contained in animated integer 650, generate integer 655, and integ\_math 660. The  
14 cropped output is then analyzed by the correlate module 665 which computes the  
15 correlation between successive ROIs, i.e. ROI#1 correlation to ROI#2, ROI#2 to  
16 ROI#3, etc. for a one step correlation value. The process is repeated for two, three,  
17 etc. step correlations. The correlation curve is then fitted to determine the slice  
18 separation for the center two slices in the set used to measure the decorrelation rate.  
19 The output of this correlator is displayed by the graph viewer 670 and saved as a file  
20 which contains a separation value between each image and the next. This information  
21 is then read into fld2rect module 675 and the images from the TGA Stacker 600 are  
22 correctly spaced. The correctly positioned images can then be displayed by any desired  
23 means such as the ortho 3 slices 680 and geometry viewer 685.

24

#### 25 Additional Considerations

26 In a simple implementation, one can use a sequence of three normally obtained  
27 data slices which do not rely on a special transducer construction. In this scenario, the  
28 first data slice is obtained and then the second and third as the transducer is translated  
29 over the object being imaged. Using the first data slice as a reference, the second data  
30 slice will be slightly decorrelated from the first due to transducer motion. If the motion

1 continues in the same direction then the decorrelation that exists between the third data  
2 slice acquired and the first will be larger than that between the second and third data  
3 slice. If however, the direction changes after data slice 2 is obtained, i.e., the  
4 transducer moves back toward the position of data slice 1, then the correlation will be  
5 greater between data slices 1 and 3.

6       The inclusion of specific portions of data slices has significance in at least two  
7 ways. First, the selection of data to be used in the positioning of slices can contribute  
8 to the success of the positioning. For example, the inclusion of specular reflectors will  
9 cause the decorrelation rate to change (slow down) in a manner not related to the  
10 transducer motion. Therefore it is helpful to know the characteristics of the material  
11 producing the speckle pattern so that the decorrelation of this speckle can be used to  
12 determine the position of slices. Second, conventional criteria can be used to produce  
13 images of specific tissue types and characteristics or in the compounding of multiple  
14 sets of data slices to produce improved images as in the case of speckle reduction or  
15 imaging of connective tissue (specular reflectors).

16

## CLAIMS:

- 1 1. A method, executed by a machine, of displaying a 3D image of a human tissue  
2 volume, said method comprising:
- 3 (a) receiving a plurality of data sets, referred to as data slices, each said  
4 data slice representing a respective 2D slice of said tissue volume, said  
5 plurality of data slices having been generated by ultrasound scanning of  
6 said tissue volume;
- 7 (b) defining (1) one or more regions within one of said data slices, referred  
8 to as regions 1a, 1b, and so on, within data slice 1, and (2) one or more  
9 regions within another of said data slices, referred to as regions 2a, 2b,  
10 and so on, within data slice 2;
- 11 (c) performing a process of speckle decorrelation measurement to  
12 determine respective amounts of correlation between regions 1a and 2a,  
13 regions 1b and 2b, and so on;
- 14 (d) utilizing said respective amounts of correlation to compute a relative  
15 positional difference vector representative of a relative positional  
16 difference between data slice 1 and data slice 2;
- 17 (e) writing to said memory (1) a representation of at least a portion of said  
18 data slice 1, (2) a representation of at least a portion of said data slice 2,  
19 and (3) said relative positional difference vector;
- 20 (f) computing, from said relative positional difference vector, a relative  
21 position of each of said data slice 1 and said data slice 2 within a 3D  
22 image of the material; and
- 23 (g) displaying said 3D image on a visual display.
- 24
- 1 2. A method, executed by a machine, of creating a memory containing a data  
2 structure encoding a series of two-dimensional representations of a material,  
3 said method comprising:

- 4 (a) receiving a plurality of data sets, referred to as data slices, each said  
5 data slice representing a respective slice of said material;
- 6 (b) defining (1) one or more regions within one of said data slices, referred  
7 to as one or more regions within data slice 1, and (2) one or more  
8 regions within another of said data slices, referred to as one or more  
9 regions within data slice 2;
- 10 (c) measuring respective amounts of correlation between said one or more  
11 regions within data slice 1 and said one or more regions within data slice  
12 2;
- 13 (d) utilizing said respective amounts of correlation to compute a relative  
14 positional difference vector representative of a relative positional  
15 difference between data slice 1 and data slice 2; and
- 16 (e) writing to said memory (1) a representation of at least a portion of said  
17 data slice 1, (2) a representation of at least a portion of said data slice 2,  
18 and (3) said relative positional difference vector.

19

- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein at least some of said data slices are smaller in  
2 size than required to specify a two-dimensional image.

3

- 1 4. The method of claim 2, wherein said data slices are received from a scanhead having  
2 a position relative to the material, and further comprising determining said  
3 position by performing a computation utilizing respective portions of at least  
4 two of said data slices.

5

- 1 5. The method of claim 2, wherein said data slices are received from a scanhead  
2 that is being moved relative to the material at a rate referred to as a scanning



3 rate, and further comprising determining, from respective portions of at least  
4 two of said data slices, one or more of (i) a total number of data slices to be  
5 acquired, and (ii) a desired scanning rate.

6

1 6. The method of claim 2, wherein :

- 2 (1) at least some of said plurality of data slices are generated by scanning at  
3 least a portion of said material with a beam of coherent energy; and  
4 (2) said material comprises a plurality of energy scatterers.

5

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein said energy scatterers reflect coherent energy in  
2 a speckled pattern.

3

1 8. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

- 2 (1) computing, from said relative positional difference vector, a relative  
3 position of each of said data slice 1 and said data slice 2 within a 3D  
4 image of the material; and  
5 (2) displaying said 3D image on a visual display.

6

1 9. The method of claim 2, wherein said measurement of respective amounts of  
2 correlation is performed by a process of speckle decorrelation measurement.

3

1 10. The method of claim 2, wherein said 2D data slices are generated by an  
2 ultrasound scan of said material.

1 11. The method of claim 2, wherein said material is a tissue volume.

2

1 12. The method of claim 2, wherein

- 2 (1) said measurement of an amount of correlation between a first one of  
3 said one or more regions in data slice 1 and a region in data slice 2 is  
4 performed by (i) locating one of said one or more regions in data  
5 slice 2 that has a minimum decorrelation value, referred to as a  
6 minimum-decorrelation region, and (ii) determining two orthogonal in-  
7 plane components of a vector between said minimum-decorrelation  
8 region and said first one of said regions in data slice 1; and  
9 (2) said utilization of said amount of correlation is performed by utilizing, as  
10 said measurement of said amount of correlation, an out-of-plane  
11 component of said vector that is orthogonal to said in-plane  
12 components.

13

1 13. A method, executed by a machine, of displaying a 3D image of a human tissue  
2 volume, said method comprising:

- 3 (a) receiving a plurality of data sets, referred to as data slices, each said  
4 data slice representing a respective 2D slice of said tissue volume;  
5 (b) defining (1) one or more regions within one of said data slices, referred  
6 to as one or more regions within data slice 1, and (2) one or more  
7 regions within another of said data slices, referred to as one or more  
8 regions within data slice 2;  
9 (c) performing a process of speckle decorrelation measurement to  
10 determine respective amounts of correlation between said one or more  
11 regions in data slice 1 and said one or more regions in data slice 2;  
12 (d) utilizing said respective amounts of correlation to compute a relative  
13 positional difference vector representative of a relative positional  
14 difference between data slice 1 and data slice 2;

- 15 (e) computing, from said relative positional difference vector, a relative  
16 position of each of said data slice 1 and said data slice 2 within a 3D  
17 image of the material; and  
18 (f) displaying said 3D image on a visual display.

19

- 1 14. A program storage device readable by the machine of a specified one of claims  
2 1 through 13, encoding instructions for performing the operations of said  
3 specified one claim.

4

- 1 15. A machine containing a memory having a data structure created by a method in  
2 accordance with a specified one of claims 2 through 12.

3

- 1 16. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said data slices are obtained  
2 using an imaging transducer.

3

- 1 17. A method in accordance with claim 16, further comprising:  
2 determining that motion of said transducer has changed by detecting an increase  
3 in the correlation of at least one data slice relative to at least one other  
4 previously obtained data slice.

5

- 1 18. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said step of computing said  
2 relative positional difference vector comprises image processing to find regions  
3 of coherent speckle.

4

1 19. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said step of computing said  
2 relative positional difference vector comprises image processing to extract data  
3 which do not represent coherent speckle.  
4

1 20. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said step of computing said  
2 relative positional difference vector comprises image processing to extract data  
3 which do not decorrelate rapidly.  
4

1 21. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said step of computing said  
2 relative positional difference vector using characteristics of data in a data slice  
3 to predict the behavior in an out-of-plane direction to include data in the  
4 positioning of slices.  
5

1 22. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said step of computing said  
2 relative positional difference vector comprises using characteristics of data in a  
3 data slice to predict the behavior in an out-of-plane direction to exclude data in  
4 the positioning of slices.  
5

1 23. A method of generating image views of imaged material, which views reveal  
2 specific characteristics of said material, comprising:  
3 (a) receiving a plurality of data sets, referred to as data slices, each data  
4 slice representing a respective 2-D image of said material;  
5 (b) image processing said data slices to identify regions of coherent speckle  
6 therein;  
7 (c) generating said image views using slices having regions of coherent  
8 speckle therein.  
9

1 24. A method of generating image views of imaged material, which views reveal  
2 specific characteristics of said material, comprising:  
3

- 4 (a) receiving a plurality of data sets, referred to as data slices, each data  
5 slice representing a respective 2-D image of said material;
- 6 (b) image processing said data slices to extract data which do not represent  
7 coherent speckle;
- 8 (c) generating said image views using said processed data slices.  
9
- 1 25. A method of generating image views of imaged material, which views reveal  
2 specific characteristics of said material, comprising:
- 3 (a) receiving a plurality of data sets, referred to as data slices, each data  
4 slice representing a respective 2-D image of said material;  
5
- 6 (b) image processing said data slices to assess decorrelation rates in 3-D;  
7
- 8 (c) selecting data slices for said image views based on said assessed  
9 decorrelation rates.  
10
- 1 26. A method in accordance with claim 24, wherein said step (b) of image  
2 processing to extract data which do not represent coherent speckle comprises  
3 detecting and subtracting data corresponding to reverberations.  
4
- 1 27. A method in accordance with claim 25, wherein said step (c) of selecting data  
2 slices based on assessed decorrelation rates comprises assessing decorrelation  
3 rates in adjacent slices to identify sets of slices in which decorrelation rate  
4 corresponds to artifacts of multiple scattering, refraction, diffraction, or  
5 shadowing.  
6
- 1 28. A method in accordance with claim 25, wherein said step (c) of selecting data  
2 slices based on assessed decorrelation rates comprises assessing decorrelation  
3 rates in adjacent slices to identify regions of adjacent slices decelerating more  
4 rapidly than remaining regions in said adjacent slices.

5

1 29. A method in accordance with any of claims 26, 27, or 28, further comprising  
2 the step (d) of generating image views using data slices and portions of data  
3 slices which are relatively free from artifact.

4

1 30. A method in accordance with any of claims 26, 27, or 28, further comprising  
2 the step (d) of generating image views using data slices which reveal a desired  
3 characteristics of said imaged material.

4

1 31. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said plurality of data sets  
2 include data slices from at least two different look directions.

3

1 32. A method in accordance with claim 31, wherein all but one of said plurality of  
2 data sets can include only one data slice.

3

1 33. A method in accordance with claim 32, further comprising the step (f) of  
2 spatially aligning said plurality of data sets.

3

1 34. A method in accordance with claim 33, further comprising the step (g) of  
2 refining said relative positional difference vectors between adjacent slices.

3

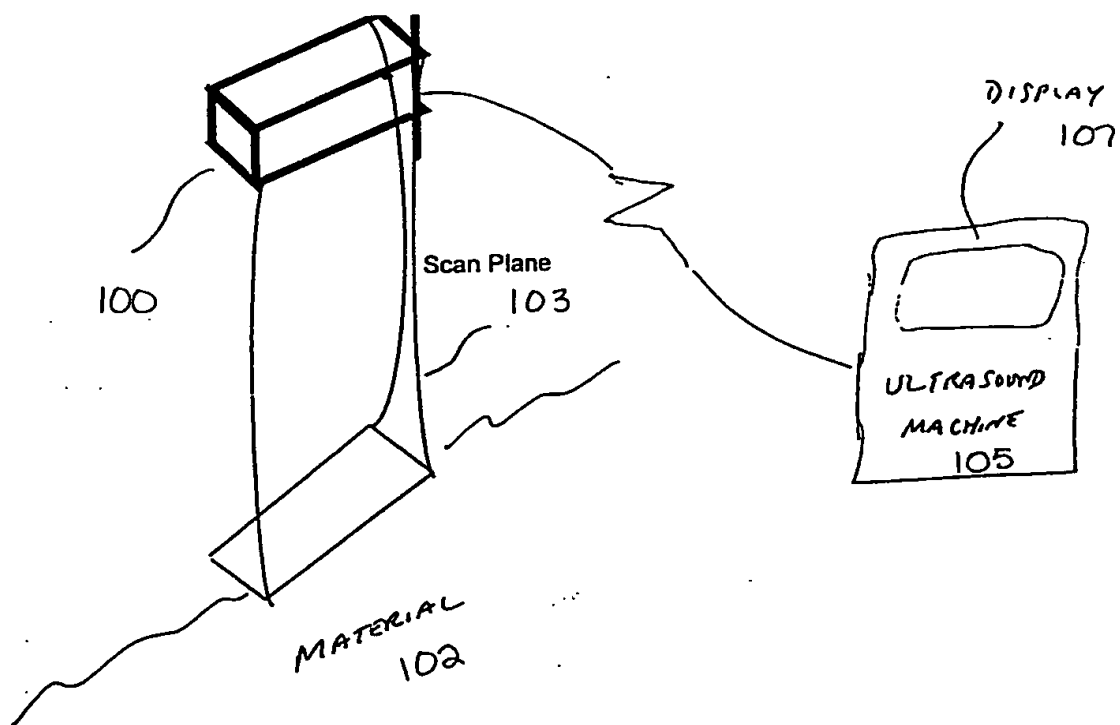
1 35. A method in accordance with claim 34, wherein said step (f) of spatial  
2 alignment further comprises the steps of:

3 (h) of cross-correlating comparisons of vertical lines between two data sets  
4 to locate a most likely intersection point of two data slices from said  
5 two data sets; and

6

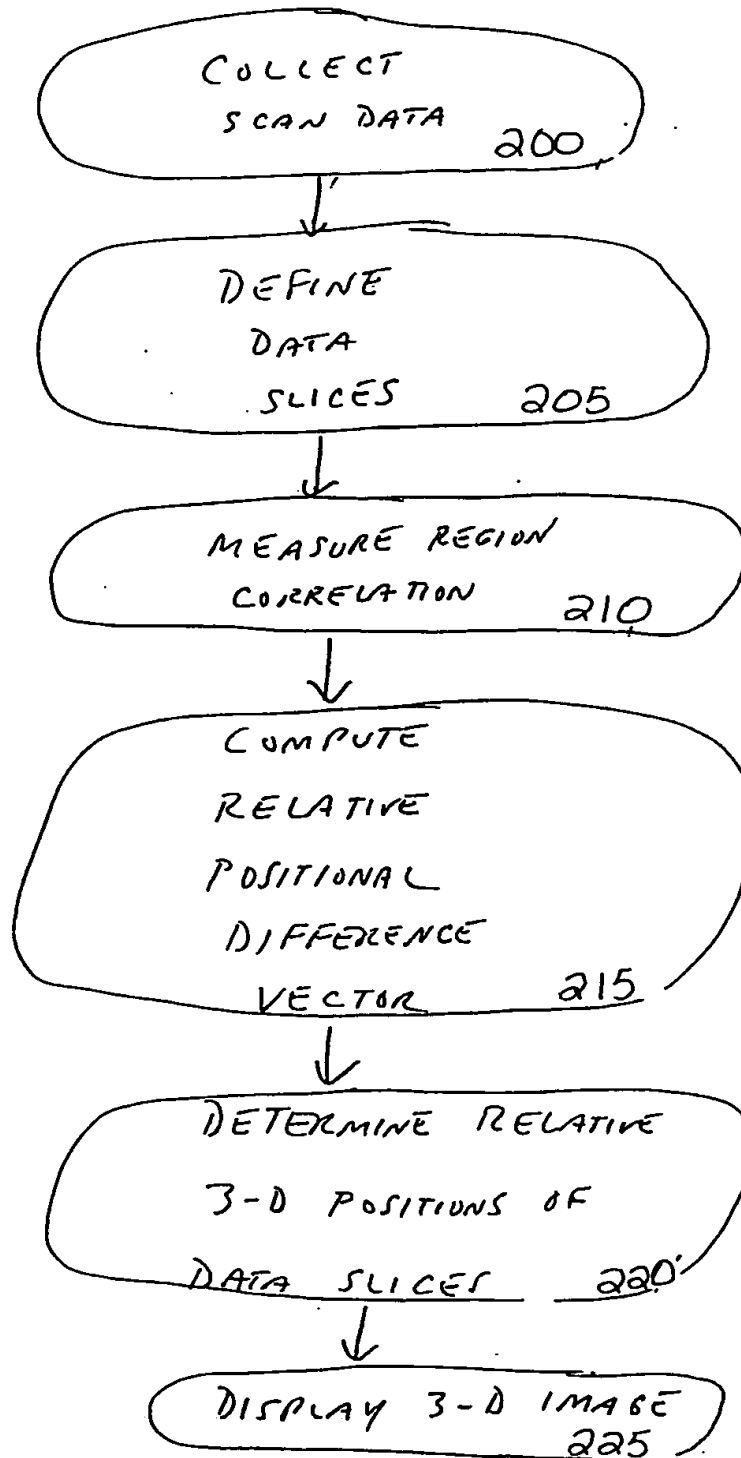
7 (i) utilizing said intersection point to position said data sets.

FIG. 1

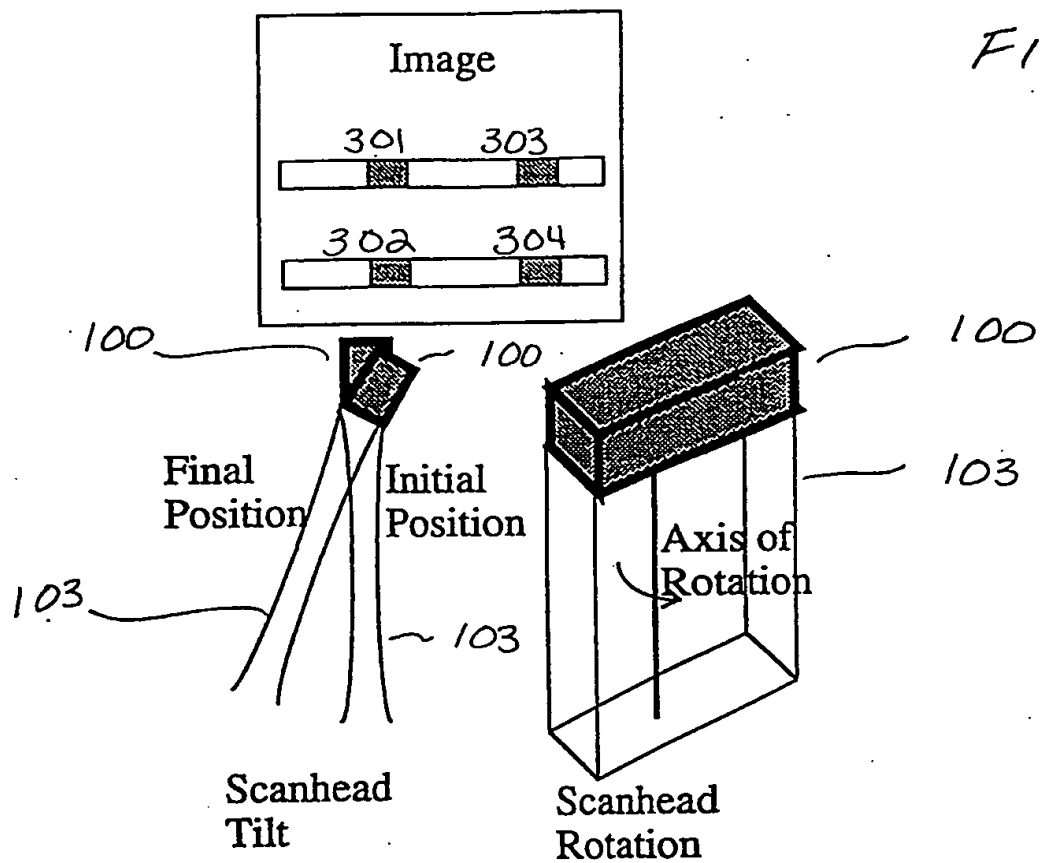


2/6

FIG. 2







4/6

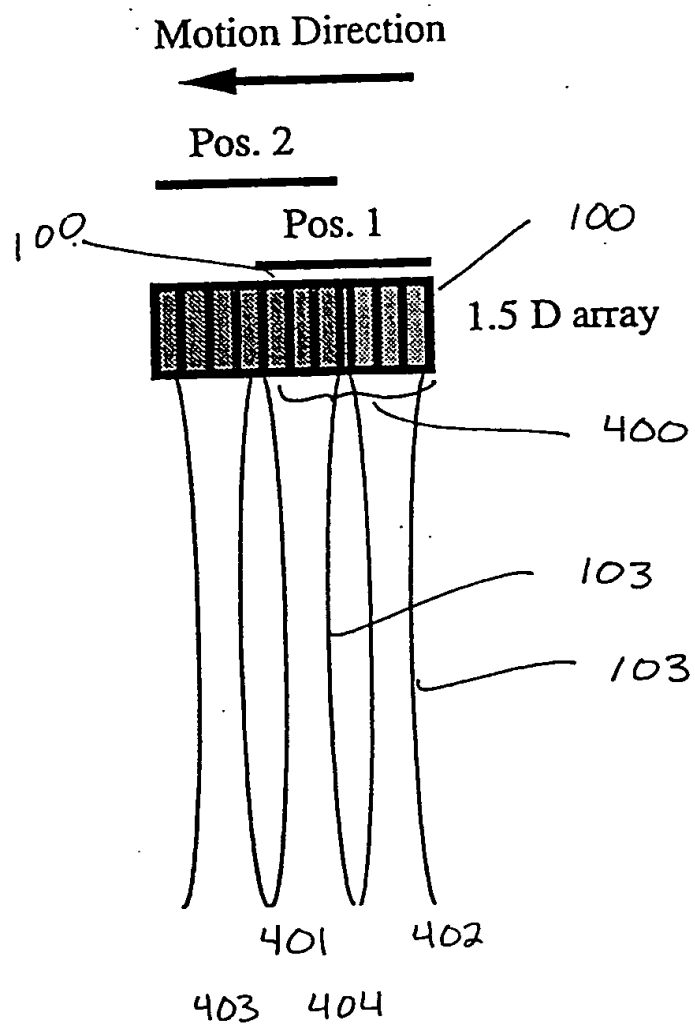
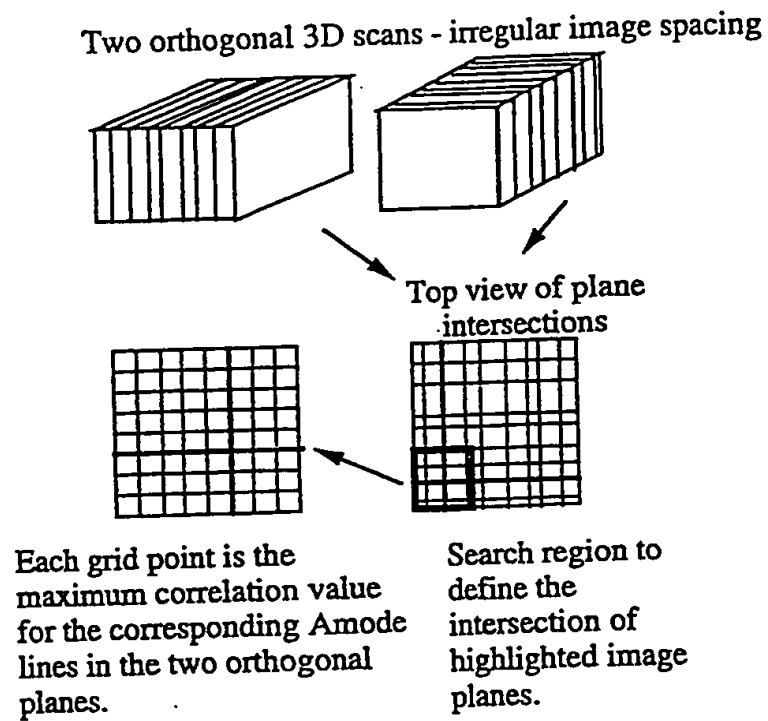


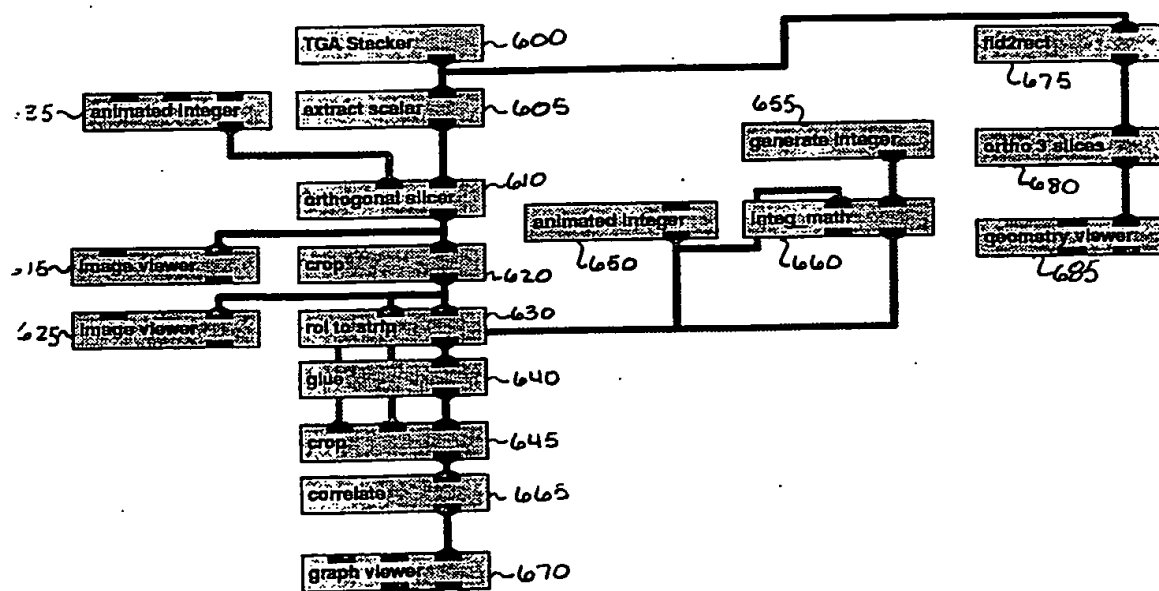
FIG. 4

FIG. 5



- Diagram of A mode correlation for slice positioning.

FIG. 6

Block Diagram  
of Software

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US96/10189

## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : G06F 15/00; G06T 15/70

US CL : 395/118, 119, 125; 356/35.5

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 395/114, 118, 119, 120, 124, 125, 125; 356/35.5, 375

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

APS

search terms: speckel (w) (correlat? or decorrelat?)

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US, A, 5,049,987 (HOPPENSTEIN) 17 September 1991, col.4, line 62 through col.6, line 24.	23-30
A	US, A, 5,287,435 (COHEN ET AL) 15 February 1994.	NONE
A	US, A, 5,000,183 (BONNEFOUS) 19 March 1991..	NONE
A	US, A, 4,322,162 (MCKELVIE ET AL) 30 March 1982.	NONE
A	US, A, 5,061,860 (TAKEMORI) 29 October 1991.	NONE
A	US, A, 5,412,763 (KNOPLIOCH ET AL) 02 May 1995.	NONE
A, P	US, A, 5,426,498 (BRUECK ET AL) 20 June 1995.	NONE



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

28 AUGUST 1996

Date of mailing of the international search report

27 SEP 1996

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US  
Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks  
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**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**International application No.  
PCT/US96/10189

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US, A, 4,967,093 (TAKEMORI) 30 October 1990, col.4, line 10 through col.7, line 12.	1-35

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